

Meeting of the Historical Architectural Review Board
25 May 2006

The Falls Church Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB) convened its monthly meeting at 7:40 PM. Present were Chair Charles Moore, Allen Greenberg, Carol Jackson, Linda Valentino, and staff liaison Debra Gee.

As its first item of business, the HARB considered TR06-20, a Resolution to amend the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Falls Church, Virginia, to change the designation of 0.34 acre (14,963) parcel of land located at 110 Great Falls Street from “Low Density Residential” to “Transitional” on the City’s Future Land Use Map; and T06-09, a Ordinance to amend the Official Zoning Map for the same property. The HARB made the following statements and recommendations to the City Council:

The HARB first favored retaining the property with the use for which it was built, and second for an owner’s opportunity for retaining the property with an adaptive reuse.

The HARB noted that a change in zoning that increases the value of the property makes the protected property vulnerable to razing of the built elements. There is a precedent of owners of properties designated for protection under the City’s HCC Ordinance, which have been rezoned and/or adapted for reuse for commercial purposes, arguing that it is difficult to achieve the highest and best use of a property when that property contains a structure that was built as a residence. However, commercial zoning on a protected property does not create an automatic ability to raze existing structure.

If the subject property were rezoned, then the use proposed would provide a buffer between adjacent residential and commercial zoning districts. The subject property is important to anchoring the remaining historic fabric in the neighborhood. Any rezoning is, in essence, a gift from the City. Therefore, the HARB recommends that a condition of approval for this rezoning be that any future alterations to the property be contingent upon the HARB’s approval. This strengthened *approval* process would exceed the current *advice* that HARB usually offers to applicants required to come before the Board. Such a proffer or condition of rezoning would increase the level of protection for this property.

The HARB then considered TR06-19, a Resolution to amend the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Falls Church, Virginia, to change the designation of 0.66 acres of land located in the 1000 block of West Broad Street from “Mixed use” to “Parks and Open Space” on the City’s Future Land Use Map; and T06-08, a Ordinance to amend the Official Zoning Map for the same property. Following a discussion, the HARB reported to the City Council that these applications are not within its purview, but it had no objection to the amendments proposed.

Chair Moore reported on the work of the Preservation Partners Task Force. The Task Force is currently considering recommendations to the City Council. Issues under consideration include creating multiple property districts with various levels of review for contributing and noncontributing properties within those districts, and seeking the consensus of a percentage of owners for the creation of a district; creating single property districts with a "Significant" designation, and increasing the level of protection of those properties to the National Register standards.

The HARB held a brief discussion on the condition of the protected property at 409 South West Street. Following a fire in the structure last fall, the Building Official has been unsuccessful in contacting the owner to conduct a post-fire inspection. The HARB had requested an inspection and a report from the Building Official, as permitted by the HCC Ordinance in response to concerns of potential demolition by neglect. The existing roof is difficult to see given the Italianate style of the residence and its location at the top of a hill. Chair Moore will write the owner to inquire about future plans for the rehabilitation of the property and any assistance that either the HARB or the Village Preservation and Improvement Society might offer to the owner in this matter.

The Minutes of the HARB's 27 April 2006 meeting were continued until the next meeting.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Gee, Pro-tem Secretary